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ON PAGE 1-D

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Reading Kremlin signals

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Eight years ago, Professor Richard Pipes, the Harvard historian and military strategist, published a startling article, startling because it flew against the conventional wisdom of the day which held that U.S. and Soviet nuclear weaponry precludes large-scale warfare forever more and that all-out nuclear war is no longer a rational option.

The title of the Pipes article which ran in *Commentary* magazine (July 1977) was, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War." The title tells the story. Since that article was published, Mr. Pipes has served as President Reagan's appointee on the staff of the National Security Council. Earlier he had served as President Ford's chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to prepare an estimate of Soviet strategic objectives as an alternative to the provably overoptimistic estimate of the CIA in its earlier pre-Casey incarnation.

I have recently reread this article and an updating of his thesis in Mr. Pipes' recent book, *Survival Is Not Enough*.

I was attempting to understand the enormous buildup of the Soviet Navy in the Pacific Ocean, a miltitary-political phenomenon of incalculable significance, perhaps as significant as the implantation of thousands of MIRV'd SS-20s targeted against Western Europe.

The Soviet Union today has the military ability to blockade the shipping lanes of communication for the Pacific Rim countries and thereby transform Japan into a Soviet dependency. To demonstrate its intimidatory power, the Soviet Navy has been carrying out huge naval maneuvers in Japanese waters, while regularly overflying Japanese territory. Ony one country stands in the way of achieving Japan's "Finlandization," if not worse — the United States.

In recent years, the democracies have lost sight of a simple and tragic fact of modern life:

The Soviet Union, as part of the messianic Marxism-Leninism from which the Politiburo derives its legitimacy, is preparing for war against the United States.

To utter this truth is not to say that Gorbachev & Co. are war-mad, but rather that they accept the possiblity and even, perhaps, the certainty that the day of confrontation may come again, as it did over Berlin during Stalin's time and over Cuba in Nikita Khrushchev's time.

To say that Gorbachev & Co. are not war-mad is not to suggest that for them war is an unthinkable option but merely that Marxism-Leninism also subsumes adaptation of Bismarck's answer to his rhetorical question: "Do I want war? Of course not, I want victory." Bismarck's rejoinder didn't turn him into a pacifist.

Mr. Pipes, one of the West's leading students of Soviet military doctrine, cited in his *Commentary* article a statement by V. Karabanov, an authoritative Soviet spokesman on military matters: "There is profound erroneousness and harm in the disorienting claims of bourgeois ideologists that there will be no victor in a thermonuclear war."

Those who control the U.S.S.R.'s nuclear arsenal and war strategy simply do not accept the notion popular among some American analysts, like Paul Warnke, of mutual deterrence. Such a notion, pushed to a logical conclusion, would mean that a country could find security in "a finite number of nuclear warheads and on an appropriate quantity of delivery vehicles," wrote Mr. Pipes. Thus, the large and costly military establishments, like the Soviet army, navy, and air force, and strategic rocket forces could be disbanded. On the contrary, the U.S.S.R. has been expanding in all branches of the military.

According to Mr. Pipes:

- Soviet military doctrine sees "conflict and violence as natural regulators of all human affairs: wars between nations, in its view, represent only a variant of wars between classes, recourse to the one or the other being dependent on circumstances." A world without conflict will only be possible when the Communist mode of production dominates mankind.
- Soviet military theorists "reject the notion that technology (i.e., weapons) decides strategy. They perceive the relationship to be the reverse: strategic objectives determine the procurement and application of weapons."
- While Soviet strategists agree that nuclear weapons have profoundly affected warfare, they reject the idea that these weapons have altered the essential quality of warfare. On the contrary, they believe that nuclear weapons coupled to intercontinental missiles can "by themselves carry out strategic missions which previously were accomplished only by means of prolonged tactical operations," Mr. Pipes writes.
- Implicit in these Soviet ideas is the belief that nuclear warfare is feasible, that the basic function of warfare is defined by Clausewitz remains valid to this day despite weaponry breakthroughs including, it might be added, President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Mr. Pipes quotes a Soviet military manual by V.D. Sokolovskii as saying in a paraphrase of Clausewitz: "It is well known that the essential nature of war as a contribution of politics does not change with changing technology and armament."
- The Soviet view, according to the official *Military-Historical Journal* as quoted by Mr. Pipes, is that "War must not simply [be] the defeat of the enemy, it must be his destruction. This condition has become the basis of Soviet military strategy."
- Soviet strategic doctrine calls for victory, not deterrence; weapons superiority, not sufficiency; offensive action, not retaliation. These attributes contradict the belief system of the majority of U.S. civilian strategists.

Mr. Pipes concluded his pioneering article with this warning:

[A]s long as the Soviets persist in adhering to the Clauswitzian maxim on the function of war, mutual deterrence does not really exist. And unilateral deterrence is feasible only if we understand the Soviet war-winning strategy and make it impossible for them to succeed."

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